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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 JUSE-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 /084 W
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R 280628Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8416
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN KS US
SUBJ: PRESIDENT PAK INTERVIEW

SUMMARY: DECEMBER 24 KOREAN PRESS GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO PRESIDENT PAK'S FUJI-TV INTERVIEW, WHICH WAS CARRIED BY ALL KOREAN TV STATIONS ON DECEMBER 23. PRESIDENT CALLED PAK TONG-SON CASE "REGRETTABLE", WHILE DENYING ROKG INVOLVEMENT. HE ALSO DISCUSSED TROOP WITHDRAWAL, N-S RELATIONS, AND 1978 ELECTIONS. PRESIDENT STRESSED KEY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WAS SURVIVAL OF ROK. HE ALSO INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO MEET PRESIDENT CARTER. TWO DAILIES CARRIED EDITORIALS URGING SUMMIT TALKS. END SUMMARY.

1. DECEMBER 24 PRESS GAVE TOP-HEADLINE COVERAGE TO PRESIDENT PAK'S NOVEMBER 29 INTERVIEW WITH FUJI-TV, BROADCAST DEC. 23. INTERVIEW REPEATED ESTABLISHED ROK POSITIONS ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL; S-N KOREAN DIALOGUE AND NK ATTEMPTS TO CONTACT U.S. ON FORTHCOMING ELECTION, PAK SAID HIS DECISION TO SEEK REELECTION WOULD DEPEND ON "WILL OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR UNIFICATION". DISCUSSING HUMAN RIGHTS PAK SAID THAT MOST SIGNIFICANT "HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM" WAS "SURVIVAL" OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE AND THAT ALL OTHER RIGHTS WERE OF LOWER
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PRECEDENCE.

2. PRESIDENT AGAIN DENIED THAT PAK TONG-SON WAS IN THE EMPLOY OF ROKG, DESCRIBED AS "REGRETTABLE" THE DISRUPTION TO US-ROK RELATIONS PAK HAD CAUSED AND PROMISED "MAXIMUM POSSIBLE COOPERATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES AND DOMESTIC LAW". HE HOPED FOR EARLY RESOLUTION.

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3. IN RESPONSE TO REPORTER'S QUESTION, PRESIDENT PAK SAID THAT THOUGH HE HAD NO SPECIFIC PLANS AT PRESENT, HE WAS "WILLING TO MEET PRESIDENT CARTER AT ANY TIME, IF NECESSARY", NOTING US AND ROK ARE "ALLIES HAVING COMMON GOALS AND INTERESTS".

4. FOUR WEEKEND PAPERS CARRIED EDITORIALS ON THE INTERVIEW. HANKUK ILBO AND KYONGHYANG SHINMUN PRAISED PRESIDENT PAK'S COMMENTS, MAKING SPECIAL NOTE OF HIS DESCRIPTION OF NK-SK RELATIONS. THESE EDITORIALS ALSO STRESSED PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ASPECT OF THE INTERVIEW, AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PAK'S REMARKS WOULD HELP JAPANESE (AND AMERICANS) TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ROK. FIRST SEOUL SHINMUN EDITORIAL DEALT EXCLUSIVELY WITH PRESIDENT PAK'S REVIEW OF NK-SK RELATIONS.

5. OFFICIAL SEOUL SHINMUN AND SHINA ILBO EDITORIALS DECEMBER 26 FOCUSSED ON PAK'S "WILLINGNESS" TO MEET PRESIDENT CARTER AND CALLED FOR BOTH COUNTRIES TO MAKE EFFORTS TOWARDS CONVENING A SUMMIT MEETING. SHINA ILBO EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT TALKS HAD NOT BEEN HELD DURING CARTER'S FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. (WE MAY BE HEARING MORE OF THIS THEME.)
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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TAGS: SOPN, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
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